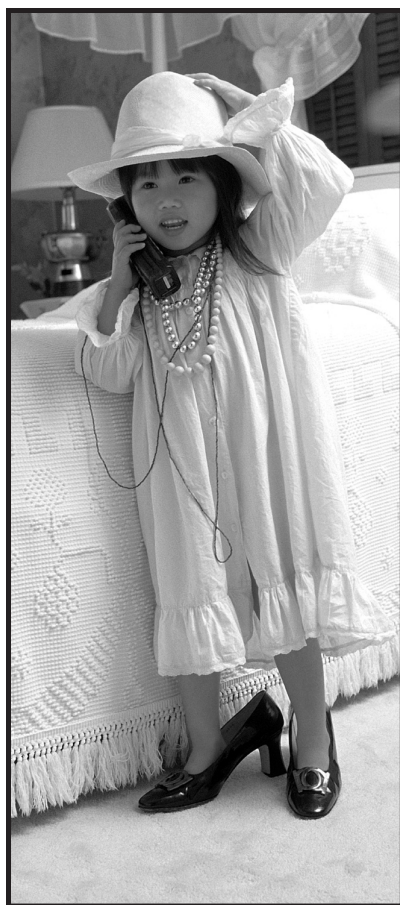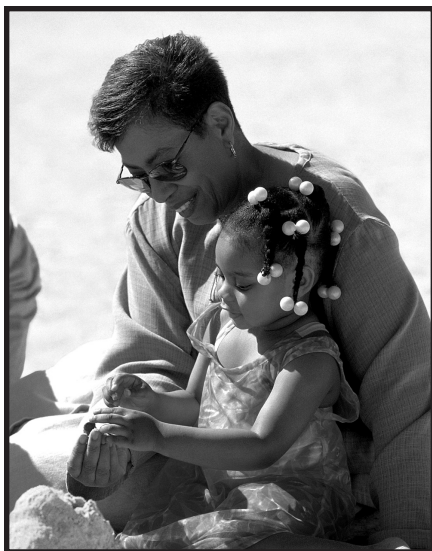# Teacher's Guide:
Early Social and Emotional Development and Approaches to Learning

Acknowledgments

T he *Missouri Pre-K Social and Emotional Development Standards* are the collaborative effort of a broad-based group of individuals who represent the many facets of the early childhood community in Missouri. This committee drew upon current research and consulted other national and state initiatives for recommendations. In addition, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Department of Health and Senior Services, Department of Social Services, the Missouri State Head Start Collaboration Office, the Parents as Teachers National Center, and the Project Construct National Center contributed to this work under the leadership of the Early Childhood Section of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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Purpose

T his guide, along with the *Parent Handbook*, is a companion piece to the *Missouri Pre-K Social and Emotional Development Standards and Approaches to Learning*. It is intended for all adults who work with preschool-age children and their families — teachers, caregivers, and/or parent educators. The guide is designed to provide an explanation of the standards and contains practical suggestions for creating engaging, developmentally appropriate learning communities where each child's social and emotional development is fostered.

Why is it important to have such standards? In Missouri, the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 called together a group of master teachers, parents and policy-makers from around the state. The Show-Me Standards were the result of that group's work. Those standards are designed for students in kindergarten through grade 12 and serve to ensure that graduates of Missouri's public schools have the knowledge, skills and competencies to lead productive, fulfilling and successful lives.

However, we all realize that the foundations for learning are laid well before a child enters kindergarten! Research tells us that the pre-kindergarten years provide crucial opportunities for educators and caregivers to influence children's growth and development. If our goal is that every child enter kindergarten ready to learn and succeed, pre-kindergarten educational standards can provide us with shared understandings about the competencies critical for this to occur. In addition, pre-K standards provide a direct link to the Show-Me Standards, so we know that we are preparing children for the high expectations they will encounter as they progress through school.

To this end, the pre-K standards describe the social and emotional competencies most children should demonstrate by the time they enter kindergarten. They represent a shared set of expectations for preschool children that were developed by drawing upon current research about how young children develop and learn. It is important to keep in mind, however, that children develop and learn in their own unique ways. While research demonstrates that these standards are appropriate for most children who are about to enter kindergarten, our responsibility as educators is to assess where each child is on the developmental continuum and build on what that child knows and can do.

Educators can determine this only through ongoing observational assessment. This guide will illustrate some indicators that teachers can reliably assess to show each child's progress over time. This data can be used to plan meaningful, engaging learning experiences that promote both social and emotional competencies and strong, sustainable learning communities. You will also find information about creating supportive environments and partnering with parents and families to promote community building and an enthusiasm for learning as well as a list of helpful resources.

Guiding Principles

Missouri early childhood practices are based on the following principles. They provide a structure to support our work with young children and remind us of the "big picture" — the theoretical framework for our teaching.

1. **All children actively seek to comprehend the world in which they live.** Given the opportunity to make choices concerning their activities, they acquire knowledge, skills and the ability to solve problems. Children are born with a desire to learn about and make sense of their world. Research has shown us that if children are able to choose what they would like to find out about, they not only gain knowledge and skills but are highly motivated to do so. We can foster this early love for learning by allowing children choices in their activities and by supporting their attempts to solve their own problems.

2. **Children construct knowledge and values through interactions with peers, parents and other adults and through active exploration of the physical and social environments.** Children flourish in a learning community where they can directly act on objects and interact with people. This is because, for young children, thoughts and actions are very closely related. When we provide children with opportunities to explore, experiment, make predictions, collaborate and share their thinking with others, we support both their cognitive and social development.

3. **Young children's thinking contains predictable errors.** As children develop, they construct knowledge by integrating new information with what they already know. In doing so, children will often make errors or mistaken assumptions. This is a necessary part of the learning process. When we give children enough time and appropriate guidance to recognize and correct their errors, we not only teach them how to think for themselves, but we show them that we have confidence that they can figure things out. Children with confidence in their own ability to work through problems are active thinkers!

4. **Early learning and areas of development interact and influence each other.** While adults are accustomed to categorizing learning by subject areas (science, math, etc.), this is not how young children organize their thoughts. Their emotional and social development goes hand in hand with their learning in other areas. In fact, a child's ability to build a knowledge base depends upon his or her social, emotional and physical development and is closely linked to it. As educators, we serve children best by designing learning experiences that are both meaningful to them and that span various areas of development.

5. **Families (parents) are the child's first and most important teachers.** Families (parents), as children's earliest and most influential teachers, are our most helpful partners in educating young children. We are all deeply invested in the child's success and share a common goal: to provide the best education possible in a safe, nurturing environment that is rich with opportunities for learning. Building open, respectful and trusting relationships with the parents and families of the children in our care helps children develop a sense of security and continuity between home and school.

6. **Children exhibit individual differences in their development of competencies.** Although research (and our own experience) has shown us that children generally go through identifiable stages as they grow and develop, it is also true that there can be great individual differences in the rate and manner in which children pass through these stages. This variation is normal. We can best support each child's progress by meeting children where they are and building on their strengths.

> children are born with a desire to learn about and make sense of their world

Organization

The standards cover the broad scope of child development and are organized by:

I. **Content Component —** the specific content area to be addressed; for example, knowledge of self and knowledge of others.

II. **Process Standards —** identifiable competencies or capabilities in the process of social and emotional development, such as developing self-control and building relationships of mutual trust and respect with others.

III. **Indicators —** observable milestones in the development of competencies, such as initiating interactions with others and participating successfully as a member of a group.

IV. **Examples —** specific behaviors children may exhibit in their development, such as expressing preferences, listening while others are speaking and sharing ideas in a group situation.

This structure provides us with an accessible way to see how the standards fit into our curriculum and teaching practices.

The Social and Emotional Standards (Goals) and Approaches to Learning

T here are three content components in this developmental domain: knowledge of self, knowledge of others, and approaches to learning. In addition, you will find process standards, along with indicators and examples, associated with each of these content components. Together the content and process standards reflect the various dimensions of children's social and emotional development.

Social and Emotional Standards

Knowledge of self

- Exhibits self-awareness.
- Develops self-control.
- Develops personal responsibility.

Knowledge of others

- Builds relationships of mutual trust and respect with others.
- Works cooperatively with children and adults.

Approaches to Learning

- Shows curiosity.
- Takes initiative.
- Exhibits creativity.
- Shows confidence.
- Displays persistence.
- Uses problem-solving skills.

Knowledge of self

Exhibits self-awareness.

This standard refers to the child's growing awareness of his or her own preferences and abilities as well as personal information. As children develop a sense of personal identity, they begin to recognize the characteristics that make them unique as individuals and to build self-esteem. They also begin to develop a sense of their family connections and cultural identity. This is a crucial early step along the pathway to becoming an autonomous, that is, independent and self-governing, person. Also, knowing and understanding one's self is the basis for knowing and understanding others and leads to the capacity to take others' perspectives.

There are three indicators to assess how a child exhibits self-awareness:

Indicators The child …	Examples The child …
Shows respect for self.	• stands up for his or her own rights and needs. • acknowledges accomplishments (e.g., says, "I can hit the ball."). • uses self-help skills (e.g., washing hands with soap and water, brushing teeth with assistance, trying new foods).
Develops personal preferences.	• makes choices. • expresses likes and dislikes. • chooses a favorite color, food, song, friend, etc.
Knows personal information.	• describes self using several basic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, hair color or eye color). • refers to self by first and last name. • knows parents'/guardians' names. • may know address and telephone number.

Teacher strategies to support development of self-awareness include:

- providing opportunities for children to express preferences and make choices throughout the day (e.g., at area time or at snack time).
- allowing children sufficient time to consider and make choices.
- respecting children's preferences and decisions (within reason and always with regard to safety issues).
- accepting children's ideas and opinions.
- encouraging children to express preferences through modeling.
- playing games, such as the name game, to help children learn and remember personal information.

Knowledge of self

Develops self-control.

This standard refers to the child's increasing ability to control impulses and participate in activities with others as well as to adapt to changing conditions in acceptable and culturally appropriate ways.

There are four indicators to assess a child's development of self-control:

Indicators The child …	Examples The child …
Follows simple rules.	• follows a few clear and consistent home or classroom rules. • follows rules made with adults and/or peers in a game of play. • follows safety rules.
Accepts transitions and follows daily routines.	• understands and follows schedules/routines at home or school. • manages smooth transitions from one activity to the next (e.g., comes indoors to wash hands, to eat lunch, to listen to a story). • separates from parents easily.
Expresses feelings through appropriate gestures, actions and language.	• identifies emotions (e.g., says, "I'm really mad." or "The story makes me sad."). • shares happiness or success of another. • offers to help someone who is hurt. • uses pretend play to understand and respond to feelings. • controls an impulse to take an object away from another child (e.g., uses appropriate words instead of hitting).
Adapts to different environments.	• adjusts behavior in different settings (e.g., library, home, playground or school). • follows rules in different settings.

Teacher strategies for promoting ability to exhibit self-control:

- modeling vocabulary for expressing feelings through language.
- acknowledging and accepting children's expressions of feelings.
- engaging children in talks about how to behave in various situations.
- using literature to help children take the perspective of others.
- taking advantage of events in the classroom to explain the need for rules and to involve the children in rule making and conflict resolution.
- clearly signaling transitions through the use of music, songs, etc.
- creating and posting schedules that show the events of the day/week/etc. in a way children understand (e.g., with pictures, photos or symbols).
- establishing routines that take into account children's needs for rest, activity, play, conversation, etc.

Knowledge of self

Develops personal responsibility.

This standard refers to the child's increasing sense of belonging and participating as a member of a family and community, whether at home, school or in another setting. Exhibiting a sense of personal responsibility indicates that one is aware of one's own place in the world and of the obligations that place entails. It also involves the child's growing sense of competence and confidence that he or she is a valued and contributing member of his or her family and community.

There are two indicators to assess a child's sense of personal responsibility:

Indicators The child …	Examples The child …
Cares for personal and group possessions.	• carefully handles books and other objects. • takes care of toys. • puts away belongings and materials, such as clothing, toys and art supplies.
Begins to accept the consequences of his or her own actions.	• brings a damaged object to a parent or teacher for repair after breaking it. • admits wrongdoing (e.g., says, "I hit her because she took my toy.").

Teacher strategies to promote development of personal responsibility include:

- modeling appropriate methods for handling objects, cleaning up, etc.
- providing children opportunities to do things for themselves and/or for the class.
- discussing issues of carelessness, destruction of property, etc., as soon as they occur and inviting suggestions for resolving the problem.
- allowing children to experience the consequences of carelessness, etc. (within reason and always with safety considerations in mind), then discussing the situation with the child or children (without blaming or shaming) in order to solve the problem.
- listening to children's explanations and supporting their efforts towards reparation.
- using stories/literature to engage children in taking the perspectives of others.
- asking open-ended questions to evoke children's responses.

Knowledge of others

Builds relationships of mutual trust and respect with others.

This standard refers to the child's growing ability to initiate and sustain relationships with adults and peers that are characterized by honesty, openness and consideration for others' feelings and views. Children who experience relationships that are respectful and cooperative respond with feelings of trust, security and confidence. These are the building blocks for understanding one's self as an individual and as a member of a community and for functioning as a valued member of one's social world.

There are six indicators for assessing a child's ability to develop trusting and respectful relationships:

Indicators The child ...	Examples The child ...
Respects the rights of others.	• listens while others are speaking. • takes turns and follows rules. • respects the personal space of others (e.g., keeps hands to self).
Respects adult leadership.	• uses an adult as a resource (e.g., seeks information, assistance or advice). • follows adults' guidelines for safety in the home or classroom. • follows adults' rules for appropriate behavior in different environments. • shows interest in community workers (e.g., firefighters, police officers, dentists, doctors) and understands their roles in the community.
Seeks comfort and security from significant adults.	• shows an attachment or bond to an adult. • goes to an adult if he or she has a problem. • feels safe with significant adults.
Develops friendships.	• offers help and resources to others. • has a special friendship with one or two peers (e.g., misses them if they are apart; frequently chooses them in play). • is named as a friend or play partner by others.
Uses courteous words and actions.	• says "please" and "thank you" or "hello" and "goodbye" at appropriate times. • shares toys; passes items at mealtime. • waits for a turn during conversation.

Indicators The child ...	Examples The child ...
Respects similarities and differences among people.	• notices the similarities and differences in others. • includes children with differences in play (i.e., differences such as gender, race, special needs, culture and language). • explores real-life situations through pretend play. • recognizes that different individuals have different kinds of skills and information.

Teacher strategies for supporting development of relationships of mutual trust and respect with others include:

• modeling trust, honesty and respect in dealings with children and adults.
• having class meetings to discuss events and issues, resolve problems and share celebrations and news.
• engaging the children in voting to decide questions (e.g., to determine the name of a pet).
• using literature to help children take the perspective of others and/or to facilitate problem solving.
• creating an environment where children feel safe and secure and where their feelings and views are accepted.
• modeling the vocabulary and conventions of courtesy and politeness.
• providing opportunities during the day for children to choose to work or play with particular others.
• supporting children in their efforts to resolve conflicts with others by helping them reach a mutually satisfactory resolution (rather than imposing a solution that seems "fair" to adults).
• inviting guests who are "community helpers" to talk to the children about their roles and why they do what they do.
• providing opportunities and materials for children to express their ideas, feelings and role-playing through pretend play.
• encouraging participation in group (small and/or large) games, allowing children to make up or modify rules and to resolve their own conflicts (always with safety considerations in mind).

ability to **initiate** and **sustain relationships** with **adults** and **peers** that are **characterized** by **honesty, openness** and **consideration**

Knowledge of others

Works cooperatively with children and adults.

This standard signifies the child's increasing ability to participate as a contributing member of his or her family and community. It is crucial to success in school as well as in life. Learning how to negotiate and cooperate in the process of solving everyday problems helps children develop critical thinking skills. As children learn to consider the views of others, they become increasingly able to tolerate differences of opinion. In addition, children become aware of the interdependence of people in the various communities that make up their world and to appreciate the contributions of others.

There are four indicators to assess a child's capacity to work cooperatively with other children and adults:

| Indicators
The child ... | Examples
The child ... |
|---|---|
| **Participates successfully as a member of a group.** | • allows others to join play and activities.
• participates cooperatively in large and small group activities (i.e., is sometimes a leader and sometimes a follower).
• plays cooperatively with others (e.g., takes turns when playing a game).
• identifies self as a member of a group (e.g., refers to our family, our school, our team). |
| **Shares experiences and ideas with others.** | • engages in conversations to express his or her own ideas.
• expresses self through pretend play, art, music, dance, written work and spoken language.
• shares personal information. |
| **Begins to examine a situation from another person's perspective.** | • adopts various roles during pretend play.
• expresses empathy (e.g., consoles the child who lost a game or a child who is unhappy).
• adjusts plans in consideration of others' wants and needs (e.g., asks a friend if he or she would like to go first). |
| **Resolves conflicts with others.** | • shows an interest in fairness and established rules.
• attempts to make amends (e.g., says "I'm sorry" or offers a toy).
• participates in resolving conflict with adult assistance.
• attempts to solve problems without adult help (i.e., negotiates or compromises). |

provide daily **opportunities** for children to **express themselves** through **art, construction, music, movement** and **language**

Teacher strategies to promote ability to work cooperatively as a member of a group include:

• holding "circle time" daily and encouraging children to share their news and views, plan activities, etc.
• using class meetings and discussions to resolve issues of concern.
• engaging children in small-group work.
• providing daily opportunities for children to express themselves through art, construction, music, movement and language.
• modeling how to express one's feeling through words and tone of voice.
• taking advantage of spontaneous events in the classroom to involve children in rule making and problem solving as well as meaningful projects.
• supporting children in building relationships and friendships with peers and solving their own problems by providing time and space for hands-on activities and games.
• taking time to recognize and celebrate special events and accomplishments of individuals and the class.

ability **to participate** as a **contributing family** and **community member**

Approaches to learning

Shows curiosity.

This standard refers to the child's inquisitiveness — the active desire to learn. It relates to the child's natural tendency to explore all aspects of the environment from objects and people to ideas and customs. It is through finding the answers to their own questions that children construct knowledge. Most important, young children express their curiosity not only through asking questions but also by manipulating, acting on and experimenting with objects and by tasting, touching and taking things apart. A curious child is a child who is eager and ready to learn.

There are three indicators to assess ways a child demonstrates curiosity:

Indicators The child ...	Examples The child ...
Expresses interest in people.	• asks about people in his or her environment. • takes an interest in others' activities. • asks others for personal information (e.g., asks, "What's your name?" or "Why do you have a Band-Aid?").
Shows interest in learning new things and trying new experiences.	• explores on his or her own. • develops a personal interest (e.g., likes trains, dinosaurs, dolls, etc.). • investigates and experiments with materials. • shows an interest in how others do things.
Asks questions.	• uses questions to find answers. • wonders why something is the way it is.

Teacher strategies to promote curiosity include:

- providing a learning environment with a wide variety of materials for children to explore and manipulate (being careful to avoid creating an overstimulating or overwhelming situation).
- having "real" objects (that can be safely manipulated or disassembled) available for children to explore, such as typewriters, telephones, etc.
- periodically introducing new materials (and retiring those the children seem to have lost interest in) into the classroom.
- asking children open-ended questions about what they are doing, observing or thinking about.
- modeling wonderment and ways to investigate questions.
- providing a "science area" with examples of objects (e.g., shells, interesting rocks, bird nests) and/or living things (e.g., hamsters, ant farms, etc.) for the children to observe and interact with.
- encouraging children to ask questions.
- accepting children's theories and encouraging them to test them or try them out (always with safety considerations in mind, of course).
- reading aloud literature to stimulate children's interest in and curiosity about people, places, the natural world, machines, etc.
- using children's questions about spontaneous events (e.g., a construction site across the street; artifacts from a family visit to another country) to engage them in a meaningful project.
- taking children on walks to explore the natural world.

active **desire**
to **learn**

Approaches to learning

Takes initiative.

This standard refers to a child's increasing ability to exhibit a spirit of independence and sense of control over his or her choices. It also reflects the child's ability to initiate social relationships and demonstrate a growing sense of self-sufficiency and confidence in interactions with others.

There are three indicators to assess a child's capacity to take initiative:

Indicators The child …	Examples The child …
Initiates interactions with others.	• asks a friend to join in play. • joins a play activity already in progress. • participates in group activities • suggests play activities.
Makes decisions independently.	• selects materials for a project. • offers to help others. • does the correct thing when others do not.
Develops independence during activities, routines and play.	• hangs up his or her coat when coming indoors. • enjoys playing alone at times. • completes a task.

Teacher strategies to promote ability to take initiative include:

- holding class meetings where children can propose solutions for solving problems and/or resolving conflicts.
- establishing routines and engaging class helpers to manage daily tasks.
- encouraging children to participate in group (large and small) games where they can modify or make their own rules and resolve conflicts.
- giving children opportunities to make choices throughout the day (e.g., at area or center time).
- allowing children to direct their own play.
- providing easily accessible materials for children to use as they pursue their own interests or engage in personal projects.
- seeking children's suggestions for solving problems and trying them out (within the bounds of reason and safety).
- giving children responsibility for maintaining routines, classroom chores, etc.

Approaches to learning

Exhibits creativity.

This standard refers to a child's capacity to express his or her own unique way of seeing the world as well as his or her talents. Creativity can be expressed in many ways although we commonly think of this word in association with the expressive arts. However, creativity also involves being able to deal with new situations and problems and to see things from a fresh perspective. The ability to see gaps in knowledge, to identify problems, or to extend and elaborate on ideas also contributes to one's creativity. A sense of humor is another key element of creativity — one that children, as well as adults, delight in.

There are three indicators to assess a child's expression of creativity:

Indicators The child …	Examples The child …
Tries new ways of doing things.	• completes projects differently than others (e.g., uses a novel approach in block structures, paintings, clay structures). • uses materials in a new way (e.g., blanket becomes a tent). • invents new activities or games; suggests new rules for a familiar game.
Uses imagination to generate a variety of ideas.	• makes up words, songs or stories. • engages in pretend play. • makes changes to a familiar story by adding actions or characters. • expresses ideas through art, construction, movement or music.
Exhibits a sense of humor.	• laughs when someone tells a funny story. • exaggerates a movement or statement to be funny. • makes up silly words; plays with sounds. • makes up jokes (tells simple jokes over and over).

express **ideas** through **art**, construction, **movement** or **music**

Teacher strategies to foster creativity include:

- supplying open-ended materials (e.g., yarn, wood scraps, feathers, all sorts of paper, cardboard, pipe cleaners) for the children to explore.
- allowing children to express themselves in all kinds of art media rather than having them produce versions of teacher-directed craft projects.
- encouraging children to make up songs and stories as well as to change the words to familiar tunes and stories.
- providing a well-supplied pretend-play area and periodically introducing new materials (and retiring familiar ones) so that children can vary their play.
- arranging the classroom so that materials and supplies are easily accessible to children.
- reading aloud humorous poems and stories.
- engaging the children in singing silly songs.
- allowing the children to direct their own pretend play.
- responding to children's humor.

allow **children** to **direct** their own **pretend play**

Approaches to learning

Shows confidence.

This standard refers to children's senses of faith in themselves and their own abilities; it is critical to ensuring success in learning. Confident children feel positive about themselves and their ability to do things or to adapt to changing conditions and environments. A confident child is willing to take reasonable risks, to express or defend ideas, to try new games and toys, or to engage in challenging tasks. A confident child generally feels comfortable in new settings and is able to separate from a primary caretaker.

There are two indicators to assess how a child exhibits confidence:

Indicators The child ...	Examples The child ...
Expresses his or her own ideas and opinions.	• communicates likes and dislikes. • suggests a solution for a conflict or problem. • shares ideas in a group situation (e.g., with family, peers or class-mates).
Views self as competent and has a positive self-image.	• expresses mastery of a skill (e.g., says, "Now I can swing my-self!"). • asks others to view his or her creation (e.g., says, "Look at my picture!"). • contributes to family or classroom discussions. • takes pride in accomplishments.

sense of **faith** in **themselves** and **their** own **abilities**

Teacher strategies for fostering a sense of confidence include:

- holding circle time daily and encouraging children to express their ideas and opinions.
- supporting children's attempts to solve problems and resolve conflicts.
- giving children responsibility for daily tasks (e.g., distributing snacks, cleaning up).
- discussing issues with children at their eye level.
- acknowledging children's accomplishments and creations — without excessive or rote praise (e.g., saying, "You figured out that puzzle very quickly. How did you do that?").
- asking children to describe their accomplishments or creations (e.g., "You've worked very hard on that painting. Tell me about it." or "I've never seen a clay sculpture like that before. What were you thinking of when you made it?").
- supporting a child's initiation and management of class meetings to discuss issues of concern.
- showing confidence in a child's ability to try new things (e.g., saying, "I know you're a good runner. I bet you could go even faster if you tried using the scooter.").

show
confidence
in the
child's **ability**
to **try**
new things

Approaches to learning

Displays persistence.

This standard refers to children's capacities to fully engage in what they're doing and to meet challenges appropriate to their stages of development. The ability to persist in a task or endeavor is an important element in learning; in fact, being able to cope with frustration and failure until one has achieved one's goal is the hallmark of success in life.

There are three indicators to assess how a child is able to display persistence:

Indicators The child …	Examples The child …
Sustains attention to a task or activity appropriate for his age.	• remains engaged in an activity (e.g., builds an extensive block building or completes playing a game). • attends to a task regardless of distractions. • works on a task over a period of time, leaving and returning to complete it (e.g., a Lego structure, a picture).
Pursues challenges.	• makes plans for an activity. • completes a project. • continues to try a difficult task (e.g., builds a complex block structure).
Copes with frustration.	• shows understanding when a peer accidentally knocks down his or her block structure. • can lose a game without getting upset. • persists in trying to complete a task after many attempts have failed (e.g., tying shoes, riding a bike).

Teacher strategies to foster a capacity to persist include:

- allowing children to pursue their own interests (e.g., during area time).
- arranging the classroom so children have enough space to work on a project over time.
- organizing the daily schedule so that children have large blocks of time to engage in and complete tasks and projects.
- designing the curriculum in response to children's interests.
- providing adequate supplies so that children have the resources they need to complete projects.

copes with **frustration** and **failure**

Approaches to Learning

Uses problem-solving skills.

This standard refers to the child's ability to identify questions to investigate and to figure out solutions for everyday problems. This ability is crucial for constructing knowledge as the child builds on his or her prior experiences and assimilates new information. It is how learners build a framework of understandings.

There are three indicators to assess how a child exhibits problem-solving skills:

Indicators The child ...	Examples The child ...
Recognizes problems.	• states a personal problem (e.g., says, "I can't get my jacket zipped." or "I can't find the purple marker."). • anticipates the potential for problems (e.g., says, "If I climb too high, I won't be able to get down."). • recalls a previous problem (e.g., says, "I remember the last time we built the house – we had to put another block here to hold it up.").
Tries to solve problems.	• modifies actions based on new information and experiences (e.g., changes block structure when the tower continues to fall, moves during story time to see the book, puts on a sweater when it is cold). • changes behavior in response to another child or adult (e.g., comforts another child who is crying). • asks for help from another child or adults.
Works with others to solve problems.	• cooperates in making decisions with another child (e.g., plans with a peer to build a castle out of blocks, choose what game to play, or how to share materials such as toys or markers). • offers solutions to a conflict with another child. • takes turns (e.g., says, "Let's decide who goes first, second, third … .").

ability to **identify** questions to **investigate** and to **figure** out **solutions** for everyday **problems**

Teacher strategies to promote use of problem-solving skills include:

- designing curriculum based on children's interests.
- providing a variety of accessible materials for children to use as they engage in personally meaningful projects.
- using open-ended questions to support children's investigations and experiments (e.g., asking, "What could you use to make that ramp higher?" or "Is there another way to build this so that the bridge doesn't fall down?" or "Why do you think that happened?").
- providing opportunities for children to work together (i.e., in pairs or small groups).
- giving children choices in their activities and tasks.
- organizing the daily schedule so that children have sufficient time to pursue investigations and complete projects.
- reading stories aloud and asking children for their responses to situations depicted.
- engaging the children in playing group games, especially math games.
- holding class meetings and discussions to raise and resolve issues of concern.

provide **opportunities** for children to **work together**

Creating an Environment to Support Children's Social and Emotional Development

The classroom environment is a critical component in fostering children's social and emotional development. How the room is arranged, how routines and schedules are designed, how classroom rules are established and maintained — all of these elements contribute to building a strong learning community where children feel welcome, safe and eager to learn.

Room arrangements should include a large space for group meetings but also include spaces where small groups of children can work together as well as a quiet nook or corner (or two). Having a variety of accessible materials for children to use as well as a number of interesting "centers" or areas (such as a pretend-play or housekeeping area; a block area; a center for math games, manipulatives and puzzles; an art area) engages children's interest. Allowing children to choose their activities (while providing satisfying alternatives if something proves to be too popular) not only supports their learning but also helps reduce conflicts. Designing a schedule that allows children sufficient time to pursue their interests and arranging the room so that noisy areas are separated from quiet ones also helps ease management concerns. In addition, routines that involve children in maintaining their mutual space give them a sense of ownership and investment in their classroom community. Just as adults do, children thrive in an environment that they feel they have helped design to meet their needs — needs for privacy and companionship, engagement and rest — and where they feel safe and valued as a contributing member of a community.

Communicating With Parents/Families

Parents are, of course, our most important partners as we support the social and emotional development of the children in our care. Open, trusting and respectful communication with families is essential in order for the child to have a smooth transition between home and school. Sharing information about rules and routines, how conflicts are resolved and how issues are dealt with is very important, especially because every family will have its own way of dealing with discipline and other issues of concern. There are many resources for educators interested in communicating with families, particularly on these issues. Practical Parenting Partnerships and the Parents as Teachers Program are wonderful resources; contact your school district for more information about these exemplary programs.

Resources

Books:

Bailey, B. (2000). *Easy to love, difficult to discipline: The 7 basic skills for turning conflict into cooperation.* New York: William Morrow.

Bailey, B. (2000). *I love you rituals: Activities to build bonds and strengthen relationships with children* (rev. ed.). Oviedo, FL: Loving Guidance.

Bailey, B. (1997). *There's gotta be a better way: Discipline that works!* (Rev. ed.). Oviedo, FL: Loving Guidance.

Bredekamp, S., and Copple, C. (Eds.). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs* (rev. ed.). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Bronson, M.B. (1995). *The right stuff for children birth to 8: Selecting play materials to support development.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Carlsson-Paige, N., and Levin, D.E. (2000). *Before push comes to shove: Building conflict resolution skills with children.* St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Derman-Sparks, L., and the A.B.C. Task Force. (1989). *Anti-bias curriculum: Tools for empowering young children.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

DeVries, R., and Zan, B. (1994). *Moral classrooms, moral children.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Diffily, D., and Morrison, K. (Eds.). (1996). *Family-friendly communication for early childhood programs.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Evans, B. (2002). *You can't come to my birthday party!: Conflict resolution with young children.* Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Feldman, J. (1995). *Transition time: Let's do something different!* Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.

Gartrell, D.J. (2000). *What the kids said today: Using classroom conversations to become a better teacher.* St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Greenman, J. (1988). *Caring spaces, learning places: Children's environments that work.* Redmond, WA: Exchange Press.

Greenman, J. (1998). *Places for childhoods: Making quality happen in the real world.* Redmond, WA: Exchange Press.

Hopkins, S. (Ed.). (1999). *Hearing Everyone's Voice: Educating young children for peace and democratic community.* Redmond, WA: Exchange Press.

Isbell, R., and Exelby, B. (2001). *Early learning environments that work.* Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.

Kamii, C., and DeVries, R. (1980). *Group games in early education: Implications of Piaget's theory.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Katz, L.G., and McClellan, D.E. (1997). *Fostering children's social competence: The teacher's role.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Kaiser, B. and Rasminsky, J.K. (1999). *Meeting the challenge: Effective strategies for challenging behaviours in early childhood environments.* Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Child Care Federation.

MacDonald, S. (1996). *The portfolio and its use, book II: A road map for assessment.* Little Rock, AR: Southern Early Childhood Association.

Nelsen, J., and Erwin, E. (2002). *Positive discipline for childcare providers: A practical effective plan for every preschool and daycare program.* Roseville, CA: Prima Publications.

Schiller, P., and Bryant, T. (1998). *The values book: Teaching 16 basic values to young children.* Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.

Stone, J.G. (2001). *Building classroom community: The early childhood teacher's role.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Zavitkovsky, D., Baker, K.R., Berlfein, J.R., and Almy, M. (1986). *Listen to the children.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Web Sites:

- Association for Childhood Education International: www.udel.edu/bateman/acei

- Center for Innovations in Education: www.coe.missouri.edu/~mocise

- Children's Defense Fund: www.childrensdefense.org

- Connections Newsletters: www.canr.uconn.edu/ces/child

- Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Early Childhood: www.dec-sped.org/positions/chalbeha.html

- Early Childhood Educators' and Family Web Corner: users.sgi.net/~cokids

- Early Childhood Education On Line: www.ume.maine.edu/ECEOL-L

- Earlychildhood NEWS: www.earlychildhoodnews.com

- ERIC/EECE Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education: ericeece.org/pubs/digests/2001/mcclel01.html

- Everything for Early Childhood Education Preschool-Grade 2: www.edupuppy.com

- Licensing of Child-Care Facilities in Missouri: www.health.state.mo.us/LicensingAndCertification/dc-m-4.pdf

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): www.naeyc.org

- National Child Care Information Center: ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/nccic/cctopics.html

- National Network for Child Care: www.nncc.org/Child.Dev/soc.emot.dev.5y6y.html

- PBS for Early Care Providers: www.pbs.org/wholechild/providers/index.html

- Project Construct National Center: www.projectconstruct.org

- Regents' Center for Early Developmental Education: www.uni.edu/coe/regentsctr/

Magazines:

- *The Buzz: Cool Ideas for Child Care Providers* (4 issues per year)
  Center for Innovations in Special Education
  152 Parkade Plaza, 601 Business Loop 70 W
  Columbia MO 65211-8020
  1-800-976-2473

- *Early Childhood News* (6 issues per year)
  330 Progress Road
  Dayton OH 45449
  1-800-607-4410

- *Scholastic Early Childhood Today* (8 issues per year)
  P.O. Box 54814
  Boulder CO 80322-4814
  1-800-544-2917

- *Young Children* (6 issues per year)
  National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
  1509 16th Street, NW
  Washington DC 20036-2460
  1-800-424-2460

NAEYC Brochures for Parents: (see above address for ordering)

- *Helping children learn self-control: A guide to discipline* — No. 572
- *Love and learn: Positive guidance for young children* — (Honig, A.S.) No. 528
- *Play is FUNdamental* — (McCracken, J.B.) No. 576 (No. 566 in Spanish)
- *Ready to go: What parents should know about school readiness* — No. 554
- *So many goodbyes: Ways to ease the transition between home and groups for young children* — (McCracken, J.B.) No. 573
- *Teaching young children to resist bias: What parents can do* — (Derman-Sparks, L., Gutierrez, M., and Day, C.B.) No. 565 (No. 564 in Spanish)

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